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CHAPTER XXI

THE RULING CLASSES

ACCORDING to *Kartlis-Tzkhovreba*, the office of *eristavi* was first introduced by Farnavazi, the hypothetical first King of Georgia. Having united the country, King Farnavazi, to quote the Annals,

> "created eight *eristavni* and one *spaspeti*. This *spaspeti* was second in power after the King; he ruled over the *eristavni*; under these *eristavni* in various districts he appointed *spasalarni* and heads of a thousand, and through them all taxes, royal as well as eristavian, were collected. Thus was all this created by Farnavazi after the manner of the Persian State".[1]

The titles mentioned in this quotation are all, with the exception of *eristavi*, of Persian origin; *spaspeti* is the Persian *spahpat*: *spasalari—sipahsalar*: *atassistavi*, head of a thousand, is the translation of the Persian *hasarapat*. *Eristavi*, however, is of purely Georgian origin and, as we shall see presently, denoted "commander of the army".

In the ancient literary sources the word *eri* implies two different conceptions, "the people" and "the army". Which of the two meanings of the word *eri* is the earlier it is difficult to say at the present stage of research, but it is a fact that *eri* was the only native word which the early translators of the Gospels used to convey the conception of the army.

Eristavi is a compound word consisting of *eris*, which is the genitive case of *eri*, and of *tavi* meaning the head; the whole therefore etymologically means "the head of *eri*", i.e. the head of the army. *Eristavi* is thus the equivalent of the

[1] See *Kartlis-Tzkhovreba* version of Queen Mary, pp. 20 and 21.

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Greek word *strategos*, in which sense it is indeed used by the ancient Georgian translators.

In the historical period the *eristavni* appear as rulers or governors of provinces and as the most important pillars of the early Georgian monarchy. Within their competence came not only military, but civil matters. When the royal power was abolished in Georgia in the sixth century A.D., the control of affairs devolved upon the *eristavni* or the *eristavt-eristavni*, invested, as it were, with interim sovereign authority. The dominating character of the position of the *eristavni* at this period is revealed in the *Lives* of St. Eustasius of Mtzkheta and St. Abo of Tiflis and also in the Chronicles of Sumbat. It was from the ranks of the *eristavni* that the renovators of the royal power eventually emerged.

The Georgian historical sources frequently refer to *eristavni* and *eristavt-eristavni*, but the information preserved about them is of a casual nature and incomplete. Among the early authorities only Mroveli [1] and the anonymous historian of Queen Tamara [2] have preserved for us a comparatively full list of *eristavni*. According to Mroveli, in the time of Farnavazi there were eight *eristavni* in all:

> "*Eristavni* of Margueti, of Kakheti, of Khunani, of Samshwildé, of Tsunda, of Odzrkhé, of Klarjeti, of Kujo and of Egrisi."

The enumeration of provinces shows that this list does not include all the *saeristoni* of Western Georgia; nor does it include, strangely enough, the *eristavi* of Kartli.

In *Matiane Kartlisai* the following *eristavni* are mentioned:

> "In Kakheti—*Eristavt-Eristavi* of Kakheti, Gordedzi, *Eristavi* of Pankisi, of Khornebuji, of Shtori, of Makeli and of Vezhini.
> In Meskheti—*Eristavni* of Shavsheti, of Ardanuchi, of Tukharisi, of Kalmakhi, of Kweli, of Samtzkhé and of Tao.[3]
> In Svaneti—*Eristavi* of the Svans."

The historian of Queen Tamara mentions one *eristavi*, namely the *Eristavi* of Hereti and eight *eristavt-eristavni* of the time of Giorgi III (1155–84) and of Queen Tamara (1184–1212), namely,

> "*Eristavt-Eristavni* of the Svans, of Radsha, of Tskhumi, of Odishi, of Kartli, of Kakheti, of Hereti and of Samtzkhé." [4]

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[1] *Tzkhovreba Mepeta* (*Life of the Kings*), by Leonti Mroveli, pp. 20–1.
[2] *Istoriani da Azmani* (*The Histories*, etc.).
[3] An *Eristavi* of Tao is mentioned by the Georgian Chronographer, p. 767.
[4] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 410.

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The ancient Georgian historians Juansheri and Mroveli state that originally *eristavoba* was a personal office and that it was only later that it became *sagvareulo* or hereditary. This change, according to Juansheri, must have taken place during the domination in Georgia of the Sasanian kings of Persia —to be exact, during the time of Hormuzd IV (579–90).[1] Brosset has, however, proved that no such reform took place under Hormuzd IV.[2] Whether Hormuzd had any connection with this change or not, there can be no doubt that as the power of the Iberian monarchy declined, the importance of the *eristavni* must have tended to increase, and it is quite probable that the ascendant Persians would have been inclined to strengthen the position of the *eristavni* and to weaken that of the royal *gvari* in the same way as the Mongol Il-Khans favoured the pretensions of the nobility against the two Davids during the latter half of the fourteenth century.

It is only from the *Life of St. Abo of Tiflis* by John Sabinisdze, who lived in the eighth century, that we definitely learn that in his time the office of *eristavi* had become hereditary. As the power of the monarchy renewed itself the hereditary character of the office was naturally challenged by the kings, and a struggle between the kings and the *eristavni* ensued. We have as yet little information as to the vicissitudes of this struggle during the ninth and tenth centuries, but in the eleventh century, during the reign of Bagrat III (989–1014), the hereditary rights of the *eristavni* were seriously shaken, and Bagrati more than once removed unruly and insubordinate *eristavni* and replaced them by "loyal and devoted men".

In some of the earliest Georgian documents *erismtavari* is used in place of *eristavi*.[3] It was later used also in the abbreviated form of *mtavari*.[4] At first it was a mere variation of the term denoting the same rank, but later, when differences of gradation developed in the ranks of the *eristavni*, *mtavarni* are found to have acquired precedence over the *eristavni*, and *eristavi* and *mtavari* had come to denote two distinctly different offices, the term *mtavari* being accepted as the equivalent of the Greek *arkhôn*.

Besides *mtavarni* there were in Georgia, as it will have already been noticed, the *eristavt-eristavni*, i.e. *eristavni* of the *eristavni*. In what relationship an *eristavt-eristavi* stood to a

[1] Tzkhov. *Mapisa Wakhtang Gurgaslisa*, p. 190.
[2] Brosset, *H. de la G.*, I, 216, note 1.
[3] See *Sakart. Samothkd*, p. 338.
[4] Tzkhov. *Serap. Zarzmelisai.*

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647 635 *mtavari* it is difficult to discern; some provinces were governed by *eristavt-eristavni* and some by *mtavarni*. The office of *eristavt-eristavni* is first mentioned in Georgian documents of the ninth century. A province governed by an *eristavi* was called *saeristavo*, by a *mtavari-samtavro*, and by an *eristavt-eristavi—saeristavt-eristao*.

In the earliest Georgian documents "the country" is called *sopeli*;[1] from the eighth century, however, it is called *kueqana*, in which sense the word is still in use.[2] But anciently *kueqana* denoted not only the whole of the country, and each principal component province of Georgia, such as formed separate kingdoms before the union under the mediæval kings, was called also *kueqana*. Furthermore, the same word was used to designate even the smaller units, the provinces which had never been independent, such as Trialeti, Shavsheti and the like. *Kueqana* could thus mean an administrative unit. At the head of the administration of a large *kueqana* stood an *eristavt-eristavi* and at the head of that of a smaller *kueqana* an *eristavi*.

[554] *Eristavt-eristavni* did not enjoy complete equality. Their greatness depended on the importance of the provinces which they administered. Those who governed provinces that had been independent kingdoms before the unification of Georgia were held in greater honour and respect. Such *eristavt-eristavni* were known in the words of the mediæval Georgian historians as "holders of kings' seats". The historian of Queen Tamara mentions two such "holders of kings' seats" one of whom was Guzani, Lord of Klarjeti and Shavsheti, "whom the King had elevated to the seat of the Tao(khi)an kings".[3] The "holders of kings' seats" were in all probability more than two, since Georgia before the unification had consisted of a number of separate kingdoms.

According to the author of *The Life of Serapion Zarzmeli*, an *eristavi* was "lord and master of the places and holder of everything therein".[4] According to another document called *Dzegli Eristavta—The Monument of the Eristavni* (of the Ksani) the duties of an *eristavi* included the "administration of churches, service to the King and government of the province".[5] "Largweli when appointed *Eristavi*, received these seven *Khevni* for administration, the churches and every *aznauri* domiciled therein."[6] From these extracts it is

[1] The present-day meaning of *sopeli* is "the village;", which formerly was called *daba*; the present-day meaning of the latter is "the small town".
[2] *Kueqana* = *Kue qana* = stone field.
[3] See *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 434
[4] *Tzkhov. Serap. Zarzmelisai*, pp. 10–11.
[5] *Krmikabi*, II, 4.
[6] *Ibid.*

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clear that an *eristavi* was the ruler and master of the land and the inhabitants of his *saeristao*; to him were subject not only the peasants but also the *aznaurni* and even the churches—the latter, however, only in so far as their relationship with the civil government was concerned.

The *eristavi* wore a particular dress which was exactly like that worn by Justinian, the Byzantine Emperor; by way of distinction he also wore "a ring and a belt"; besides "he had a banner, a horse (of particular breed) and a spear".

The *eristavt-eristavi* had authority over all *didebulni* and *aznaurni* domiciled in his *saeristavt-eristao*. Thus there was this difference between the *eristavt-eristavi* and the *eristavi*, that *didebulni*, "the great", were subject to the former and not to the latter; after the King, the *didebulni* obeyed the *eristavt-eristavi*.

In military matters, and especially during war, the *eristavt-eristavi* held supreme authority; every *didebuli* and *aznauri* and all the other inhabitants of his province had to follow his banner. *Mtavarni* and *eristavt-eristavni* wielded great power and influence; materially also they were very wealthy. Some of them were so powerful that they vied with the King and often openly opposed themselves to the royal power. At the royal receptions an *eristavt-eristavi* had this privilege, that his personal Grand Treasurer stood behind his seat with a shield and sword.

One of the functions of an *eristavt-eristavi* was the supervision of justice at the peasants' court of law; the actual dispensation of justice was entrusted to his *saeristavt-eristao mamasakhlisi*. Ecclesiastical peasants, however, were excluded from his jurisdiction.

For the benefit of an *eristavi* a special tax called *saeristavoi gamosavali* ("the eristavi's due") was collected annually. In addition to these usual and permanent dues he also received a tribute which was collected periodically. For the supervision of the peasants' court of justice he received a fixed portion of the fines imposed by the courts, which was called *kerdzi saeristavoi* ("the eristavi's portion"). When these concerned thefts this eristavi's portion appears to have amounted to one-seventh.

An *eristavt-eristavi* had a great many subordinate officials, including *temis-eristavni* (eristavni of districts); his own *mdsignobart-ukhutsesi* ("grand secretary") and *molaret-ukhutsesi* ("grand treasurer") and numerous *msakhurni*. He also had

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his *dsinashe-mdgomelni*, and his *sakutarni* (own), "fleet-footed runners and daring riders", the special messengers.

In their respective provinces, the *eristavt-eristavni* and *eristavni* had the following executive officials,

Tsikistavni, Khevisupalni,
Mamasakhlisni and *Gziirni.*[1]

Tsikistavni—"heads of fortresses"[2]—were not only commanders of fortresses, but also heads or mayors of small towns. The eleventh-century inscription at the Cathedral of Ateni mentions the *tsikhistavi* of Ateni.[3] The *tsikhistavi* of Mtzkheta and the *tsikhistavi* of Mukhrani[4] were particularly notable men. We know very little of the rights and duties of *tsikhistavni* during the eleventh or the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The only thing we can glean from the *sigelni* of this period is that the *tsikhistavni* received *satsikhistao* dues in the same manner as the *eristavni* received their *saeristao* dues.[5]

Khevisupali,[6] as the etymology of the word indicates, must have been the lord or chief of a *Khevi*. In ancient Georgian literature, *khevi*, the literal meaning of which is "the valley", was used to designate an administrative unit smaller than *kueqana*. Just as at the head of the administration of a large *kueqana* stood the *eristavt-eristavi* and at that of a small one an *eristavi*, so at the head of the administration of a *khevi* stood a *khevisupali*. Of the functions of a *khevisupali* we know very little. It is clear, however, that he too received *sakhevisupalo* dues.[7]

Gziri is a term generally derived from the Persian *gizir*. In Persian it was the title of a police official. We do not, however, know what was the function in Georgia of a *gziri* at the time it is first mentioned in the documents. According to Professor Javakhishvili, this word usually has a meaning indicating that a *gziri* was the deputy of the village *mamasakhlisi* and a special messenger to the officials generally. If it had this meaning in ancient times then it is quite possible, according to Javakhishvili, that it may be a purely Georgian word derived from *gza* = road.

The Georgian historical monuments very frequently refer to *didebulni*, *dsartchinebulni*, *mkvidrni* and *tavadni*, who appear to have exercised great influence on the affairs of the state.

[1] *See Kronikebi*, by Jordania, pp. 98, 15–19.
[2] *Ibid.*, II, 73–4.
[3] See Prof. Javakhishvili's *K'voprosu o vremeni postroeniya gruzinskago khrama v' Atmi*, in *Khrist. Vos.* I, III, 2862.
[4] *See Kronikebi*, II, ii, 14–15. [5] *Ibid.* [6] *Ibid.* [7] *Ibid.*

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• 647 Etymologically *didebuli*, of which *didebulni* is the plural, represents the past participle of the verb *dideba*, "to make great", "to greaten". From its literal meaning, therefore, it is evident that *didebuli* originally meant promoted, elevated, honoured, distinguished, exalted, great, glorious.

In ancient times *dideba* denoted a high state office or the honour resulting from holding such an office. *Didebulni aznaurni* are frequently referred to in Georgian historical documents, namely, in *The Life of Grigol Khandzteli* (pp. 63, 33); in *Matiane Kartlisai* (pp. 252, 260), and in *The Histories* by the Historian of Queen Tamara. In the first-named source is mentioned an *aznauri didebuli* whose name was Gabriel Dapanchuli (pp. 12, 14), but from another page (13) we learn that he was a *mtavari* (Greek, *arkhôn*). It is evident that he was called *didebuli* because he was a *mtavari*. His *didebuleba* then depended on the high office he held.

Didebuleba, which is the abstract form of *didebuli*, was thus also connected with *aznauroba*, but no *aznauri* is ever called *didebuli* just because he was an *aznauri*. *Didebuli* was a term denoting a member of a particular group distinct from the *aznaurni*. The relative positions of the *didebulni* and the *aznaurni* are perfectly reflected in the following sentence of the Historian of Queen Tamara, who states that, under that Queen, Georgia "was so prosperous that the land-tillers lived like the *aznaurni*, the *aznaurni* like the *didebulni*, and the *didebulni* like the kings" (p. 41).

Didebulni at the same time did not, like the *aznaurni*, constitute a social rank or class. The characteristic feature of *aznauroba* was that every son of the *aznauri gvari* was an *aznauri* by right of birth. *Didebuleba* did not have this same feature. A *didebuli* was *didebuli* personally, and no other members of his *gvari* or family had any right to the title, nor did it necessarily pass after his death to any of his descendants.

The privileges of *didebuleba* were accorded to the group of great state officials who stood in the immediate circle of the King, and the word *didebuli* in the documents is often qualified with such words as *Kartuelni*, *Sameposani* or *Sakartvelosani*. If there existed any difference—which is very difficult to discern—then it may have consisted in this, that *didebulni sameposani*, which means "of the Kingdom", may have been the *didebulni* at the head of the central institutions of the Kingdom and the *didebulni sakartvelosani*, meaning "of Georgia", those at the head of the administration of the provinces; while the *Kartuelni didebulni*, that is the Kartlian *didebulni*, may

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have meant simply what it denotes, the national regional origin. 647

Kartuelni didebulni constituted an extremely influential circle and played a prominent rôle in the councils of the state, taking precedence over other ranks of the officials and the nobility. Thus according to the Historian of Queen Tamara, Giorgi III (1155–84) declared his daughter, Tamara, "King of Georgia" with the consent of all the patriarchs and bishops, of the *didebulni* of Amier and Imier, of the *vazirni* and of the *spasalarni* and *spaspetni*.[1]

Dsarchinebuli was a term employed in a much wider sense, although it is used sometimes in place of *didebuli*, and more than once it appears as its equivalent. In the will of David Aghmashenebeli, however, they are mentioned separately, viz. "the King commands you all, every *didebuli* and *dsarchinebuli* of his Kingdom",[2] which suggests that there was also some difference between these two terms.

The Historian of Queen Tamara clearly reveals that the *dsarchinebulni*, like the *didebulni*, took a great part in the affairs of the state.[3] He, for instance, relates that Queen Tamara, when approached by the commander of her armies to sanction the invasion of Persia, "summoned the Council of all the *dsarchinebulni* of her Kingdom, of Amier and Imier, for consultation" (p. 516). It is evident that under *dsarchinebulni* here are understood *didebulni* also.

It is difficult to discern as to who or what were these *dsarchinebulni*. From a passage in the *Georgian Chronographer* this much is, however, clear, that *mtavarni* were sometimes at least styled as *dsarchinebulni*, thus "Béka the *Spasalari* of Samtzkhé summoned the *dsarchinebulni* of Samtzkhé and addressed them thus: Listen, *mtavarni* of Georgia, brothers and compatriots" (p. 767). This passage proves not only that *mtavarni* were sometimes styled *dsarchinebulni* but also that there were *dsarchinebulni* in every province of Georgia. *Dsarchinebulni*, like the *didebulni*, were *Sameposani*, *Sakartulosani* and *Kueqnisani* (of the country).

Mkvidrni, of which *mkvidri* is the singular, originally meant an inhabitant, a native. Besides this general meaning, in civil-legal literature it was used in the sense of "heir", the modern form of which is *memkvidré*. The Historian of David Aghmashenebeli states, for instance: "Thus died Rati son of Lipariti, a man disloyal, and thus ended his house, no heir

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 390.
[2] *Kronikobi*, II, 514–15.
[3] *Istoriani da Azmani*, pp. 481, 492, 516.

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●647 (*mkvidri*) remaining and his estates taken over by the King". *Mkvidri* at the same time meant also the heir to the throne.[1] But the term *mkvidrni* is also used in a different and particular sense. For instance, it is stated by the Historian of Queen Tamara that when the expelled Prince George Bogolyubskoi invaded Georgia, and Samtzkhé and Imereti rose in his favour, Queen Tamara "inquired of the reasons from her *mkvidrni*".[2] In this sense the term can mean neither the inhabitants nor the heir to the throne. In *Matiane Kartlisai* it is stated that after the death of Dmitri of Abkhazeti, who died childless, "the *mkvidrni* of the country brought Thewdosi and crowned him King" (p. 237). Thewdosi was blind, and yet they had to crown him, for according to *Matiane* no one else was there of the royal *gwari* or house (p. 236). It is apparent from the context of this sentence that *mkvidrni* implies here, not the inhabitants of Abkhazeti, but in general the notables of the land, who had the right and power to choose the successor to the throne.

The extraordinary position held by the *mkvidrni* has led Professor Javakhishvili to the conclusion that, in Georgia, the Royal House was not the sole master of the Kingdom, but that there existed a circle whose members, known as *mkvidrni kueqnisani* (of the country) or *mkvidrni sameposani* (of the Kingdom), also had a substantial share in the government.

The scarcity of the information at our disposal makes it as yet impossible to deduce as to who were these *mkvidrni* "of the country" or "of the Kingdom"; it is evident only, that they included the *didebulni* and *vazirni*. The Historian of Queen Tamara mentions as one of the *mkvidrni* of Tiflis "Abulasan *tavadi* and *amira* of Kartli and Tpilisi". He also mentions "one of the *mkvidrni*, the great merchant Zankan Zorobabeli".

[193] Etymologically *tavadi* is derived from *tavi*, meaning "the head". *Tavi* at the same time is the formative of "self". It is thus the Reflexive Pronoun; with this meaning *tavadi* represents the instrumental case and denotes "by himself"; *tavadi* then means "one who stands by himself"; who stands out; who is conspicuous. From *tavi* is also formed the verb *tavoba*, meaning "to head", "to lead", "to undertake", the future past participle of which is *tavadi*. *Tavadi* thus originally meant "a headman", "a leader" or "a chief". And indeed in this sense it is used in *Matiane*

[1] *Tskhovreba Mepet-Mepista Davitisi* (*Life of David King of Kings*), p. 290.
[2] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 437.

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Kartlisai, wherein (p. 264) it is said of Liparit Orbeliani, the *eristavt-eristavi*, who had rebelled against his King, Bagrat IV (1027–72), that he approached "the upper fortresses and secured the help of the *tavadni katsni*", that is of the head-men or chief men. 647

In course of time, however, the *tavadni* had acquired considerable importance in the affairs of the state and had become *motaulni sameposani*; *motauli* (singular), which is another derivative of *tavi*, the head, denotes even more clearly than *tavadi*—one who stands at the head. *Tavadni* then were *motaulni* or men who stood at the head of the state. The term itself has been more or less in common use in the documents dating from the eleventh century, but it is also clear that, between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, it did not denote, like *azn*a*urni*, a social class.

The Georgian Chronographer mentions *tavadni* very frequently in his work; from him it is clear that they exercised a great influence on the affairs of the state; no problem of great importance could be decided "outside of their consideration".

Who then were the *tavadni*? Many passages in the ancient documents indicate that the term was yet another classification of the great officials of the state. For instance, *Matiane Kartlisai* mentions Kakhaberis-dze Kakhaberi, the Eristavi of Radsha, Kuabulis-dzeni, Sargis Parnajaniani and Jonsheris-dze Dadian-Bediani as *tavadni*. In the *Life of Giorgi Mtadsmindeli*, the King of Antioch, called in one place *mtavari* (*arkhôn*), is mentioned as another *tavadi*.[1] In *The Histories* there is a passage which induces one to think that the commanders of the armies also were called *tavadni*. This kind of definition of the term *tavadi* is, however, short of precision. *Tavadni* could, of course, have been the holders of high state offices, but on the other hand not every great state official, be he *mtavari* or *eristavi*, was considered a *tavadi*. Many passages in the historical documents wherein *tavadni* and *eristavni* are mentioned separately convey the idea that *tavadi*, *mtavari* and *eristavi* were terms expressing different notions. Moreover, there are even passages in the ancient documents which clearly show that a man could be *tavadi* without holding a high state office; such a personage, for instance, was Abulasan whom we have mentioned above.

Tavadni, like *didebulni* and *dsarchimbulni*, were *Sameposani*,

[1] *Tskhovrebai . . . Giorgi Mtatsmindisa*, published by the Ecclesiastical Museum of Georgia, p. 308.

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647 *Sakartuelosani* and *Kartuelni*. *Tavadni* were found not only at the head of state institutions but also at the head of cities and towns; Abulasan mentioned above was one such *tavadi* of Tpilisi (Tiflis). In *The Life of David Aghmashenebeli* we read that "there arrived the learned from among the Anelian *tavadni* (of Ani) and informed King David of their decision to hand over to him the town and the fortresses" (*ibid.*, p. 311). It should be noted that the term is used in the plural, which shows that there was more than one *tavadi* at the head of the town of Ani.

We have inquired above who and what were *mkvidrni*. Compared with *tavadni* there existed, according to Professor Javakhishvili, this difference, that *mkvidri* was a term expressing a wider notion and denoting a comparatively numerous and variegated circle, while *tavadi* was the appellation of a member of a narrower and more particular group. To the *mkvidri* group belonged not only *didebulni* and *vazirni* as stated above, but also *tavadni* and even the great *vachrni*—merchants. But the *tavadni* were not numerous.

The terms *tavadi* and *didebuli* also were not expressive of an equivalent notion. It may have been, of course, that a *tavadi* was invested with a high office and bore the title of *didebuli*. In such a case he would not be *tavadi* only but *tavadi didebuli*. And indeed *Matiane Kartlisai* mentions "*tavadni didebulni* of this kingdom". But that these two terms did not denote the same thing is proved by the fact that the Georgian Chronographer mentions them separately—"the *tavadni* Kartuelni and *didebulni* gathered together".

647 554 [611] From all that has been said it is clear that *tavadi* was not like *aznauri* a term denoting a social class but a term implying personal worth. A *tavadi* was *tavadi* personally during his lifetime; none of his relations had any right to his title nor could any of them inherit it after his death. The exclusive quality of the rank was preserved long after it had become an hereditary social title, for in the eighteenth century in the list of *didebulni tavadni* in the Code of Laws of Wakhtang VI, we find a definition quoted below, from which it is clear that there could be only one *didebuli tavadi* in any one *gvari*. According to the Code, the following were the *didebulni tavadni*,

> "One head of the undivided (*gvari*) the *Eristavi* of Aragvi himself; one head of the undivided (*gvari*) Amilakhori himself; undivided one head Orbelishvili; and when his (*gvari*) was undivided Tzitzishvili also, and though not with these, has also been the *Meliki* of Somkheti."

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THE RULING CLASSES

Thus in the Kingdom of Kartli there had only been six *didebulni tavadni*, or "great lords", and they were entitled to the honour in respect of their chieftainship of the six great *gvarni*, and the honour was only due if each could claim to represent an undivided *gvari*. Thus Tzitzishvili ceased to be *didebuli tavadi* when his *gvari* became divided.

The terms *tavadi* and *didebuli* did not express exactly equivalent notions. A *didebuli*, it is true, was like a *tavadi* the son of a great *gvari*, but his *didebuleba* depended essentially on his holding a high office, without which, in spite of his being of great *gvari*, he could not have become a *didebuli*. The case was, however, different with a *tavadi*; his *tavadoba* did not depend in any way upon any state duty; to be a *tavadi* he need not have held a high office; for a *tavadi* it was enough that he was head and chief of a great *gvari*. But if he, at the same time, held a high office, he then became as already stated a *didebuli tavadi*.

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631 566 423 571 *qaleba* or *dsqaloba* was followed by blessing. Of Zakharia Mkhargrdzeli the Annalists write that the Queen "conferred *dsqaloba* by blessing upon his son, Zakharia, also"; elsewhere again it is stated that she "*sheidsqalnes* and blessed many other *didebulni* also".[1] Blessing or *dalotsva* on occasion formed part of the ceremony of conferring of every high office.

Those of the lesser *qmani* who showed great zeal, loyalty and devotion were, of course, correspondingly *shedsqalebulni*. If a *qma* who had distinguished himself received such a favour for the first time, he was *shedsqalebuli* by being newly blessed, or if he already held some office, or was entrusted with another duty he was *shedsqalebuli momatebita*, that is "additionally".

[554] At the time of blessing the beneficiary or *shedsqalebuli* received from his lord ceremonial investiture; for instance, the *Mandaturt-Ukhutsesi* was presented with a gold ferule; the *Amir-Spasalari* received a golden sword. The *eristavni* and *eristavt-eristavni* had a banner each as an ensign which distinguished their office and, although direct information is not available, it is probable that they received this symbol from the King at the time of investiture.

It is not known whether the *shedsqalebuli* took the oath of fealty, but it is certain that at the time of blessing *taqvaneba* —adoration—was laid down as a rule.

631 554 428 571 The holding of lands and provinces was directly connected with the holding of office. The lands or provinces so connected with or dependent upon the office held by the *shedsqalebuli* were called *sapatio*, i.e. held in honour.

● 647 Besides these *sapatio* provinces and lands, the King's "loyal and devoted" state officers also received by way of *shedsqaleba* the so-called *sakharajoni*. *Sakharajo* is derived from *kharaji*, meaning "the tax", and denotes "for *kharaji*"; *sakharajo* towns therefore constituted grants, the taxes from which the beneficiary could divert to his own benefit.

Sakharajo towns, fortresses and villages were granted to *shedsqalebulni* on different conditions, some as *sakutari*, meaning "own", and some as *sanakhevrot*, meaning "for half". *Sakutari*—own—should not be understood as if the grantee received the towns as his own possessions. The term has no relation to the actual ownership of the places granted; it implies only that the whole of the taxes collected from them were given to the recipient as his own for his own use, while in the case of *sanakhevrot* (for half)—granted towns the grantee

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 442.

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was given the benefit of only half the amount of the taxes collected.

Shedsqaleba thus meant the bestowing of favour by the King or some other *patroni* upon a *qma* by conferring an office or some other exclusive privilege and granting or conceding *sapatio* or *sakharajo* (*sakutarit* or *sanakhevrot*) towns, fortresses, villages and lands.

On occasions a *shedsqalebuli qma* received a heritable grant *mamulobit* or *samamulot*; grants *mamulobit* were conferred both upon the grantee and his descendants.

The terms of *sapatio* and *nadsqalobevi* grants were subject to variation. When a state official was removed from his office, the *sapatio* property, which he held as a perquisite of that office, reverted to the crown, but the King did not always strictly enforce his reversionary rights and occasionally left some of the properties in the family of the former beneficiary. Thus, for instance, when Queen Tamara deprived Qubasar of the office of *Amir-Spasalari*, she took into consideration his "slavish service" to her father, Giorgi III, and "deprived him of nothing except the office and of Lori".[1] Lori constituted, among other places, the *sapatio* property of the *Amir-Spasalari*, and once Qubasar was deprived of the office of *Amir-Spasalari*, Lori also was taken from him, but the remainder of his property—his *didebuli koneba*—the Queen left to him. In like manner when Gamrekeli, the *Amir-Spasalari*, died, because of the services he had rendered, "except Tmogvi, of nothing else were his sons deprived" by command of Tamara.[2]

Sapatio and *nadsqalobevi* property thus tended to become hereditary; the former rarely, but the latter more often. But it is noteworthy, as is evident from later *sigelni*, that neither the property granted *mamulobit* nor that which became in course of time hereditary, was ever considered to be fully and completely the private property of the *shedsqalebuli* or of his descendants. The holders of such properties, although called owners, were not in fact in a position to sell, exchange or donate them without the express permission of the King; only by "consulting" and by "permission" of the *patroni* could they deal in these properties. It follows therefore that the supreme owner of the *mamulobit* (heritable) and *nadsqalobevi* property remained after all the donor-*patroni* himself and not the *shedsqalebuli* or grantee.

According to the degree of *dsqaloba* bestowed, a *qma*

[1] *Istoriani da Azmani*, p. 406. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 444.

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thee, Vaché Guaramisdze, and grant thee subsistence . . . *samamulot* to serve the Church. . . . We have listened to thy supplication and grant *samamulot* to thee Vaché Guaramisdze, our *Msakhurt-Ukhutsesi* and thy sons and descendants, the village of Oromasheni in return for services (*samsakhurod*) to the Church." [1]

It has already been stated that *shedsqaleba* proved particularly beneficial to the high state officials and to the great *gvarishvilni* and that to them fell the greater part of the benefices. *Shedsqaleba* enriched the "loyal and obedient" *gvariani* officials. From the works of the Historians of David Aghmashenebeli and Queen Tamara we learn that in the twelfth century, especially during the reigns of Giorgi III and his daughter, the over-generous use of *shedsqaleba* on the part of the kings, made it possible for an enormous amount of wealth both movable and immovable to accumulate in the hands of the *didebulni* and *shedsqalebulni*, rendering them owners of immense estates and of numerous *qmani*.

In order to curb the power of the grasping and unruly *didgvarianni* the kings began to follow a policy of replacing them by persons of *ugvaro* or *uazno* descent who were personally dependent on the goodwill of the Court. By means of *shedsqaleba* the King made strong his "loyal and faithful servant", enriched him materially and increased the number of his *qmani*. Thus by the side of the *didgvariani* officials there came into existence in each generation a group of *msakhureuli shedsqalebulni* who, although they lacked the distinction of birth and the influence of class, were at the same time very strong, since they had been raised to the patronage of numerous towns, fortresses and villages. But the over-generous character of the beneficence shown towards the promoted *ugvaro* officials and administrators in the end defeated its own purpose; and the system of *shedsqaleba* served to perpetuate those evils to eradicate which the kings had directed all their energies and their favours. *Shedsqaleba* gradually raised the new favourites, these *ugvaro* officials, to a position of influence and power; in course of time it concentrated in their hands new accumulations of wealth; the administrative positions which they held gained them a steadily increasing political influence, and their descendants, finding themselves in the position of great hereditary land-owners, easily forgot their *uazno* or *ugvaro* origins and their indebtedness to the Crown. In these circumstances their ambitions proved as matchless and their

[1] S. Kakabadze, *XIII Saukunis pirveli nakhevris Sakartvelos Katolikosebi* (*The Georgian Catholicoses of the first half of Thirteenth Century*).

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CHAPTER XXIII

COURT AND ADMINISTRATION

THE officials of the state were called in Georgian *mokheleni* or *khelosanni*. Both words *mokhele* and *khelosani* (singular) are derived from the word *kheli*, which in its meaning is the equivalent of the Latin *manus*—hand. *Kheli* in ancient Georgian was used as a juridical term conveying the notion of "right", "authority", "power"; also of "function", "office". From *kheli* is formed *khelmdsipé*, the literal meaning of which is "hand-ripe", i.e. ripe of hand, in other words a person invested with full power or authority.[1] From the same word *kheli* is also formed *khelisupali* meaning master of *kheli* or office, that is a holder of office or authority. *Kheli* thus meant both "power", "authority" and "office", while *mokhele*, *khelosani* or *khelisupali* denoted the officials or the holders of offices. Thus in a *sigeli* granted by Queen Tamara to the Shio-Mghvimé Monastery, we read:

> "Neither over the waters, nor over the peasants shall our *khelisupalni* (i.e. officials) have any *kheli* (i.e. power or authority)"[2].

The office or authority with which a *khelisupali* or official was entrusted was called *khelisupleba*; while his department of administration was called *sakheloi*.

Mokheleni of the state were divided into two groups, namely into *khelisupalni* and *sakmis mokmedni*; *mokhele* thus was a general term, while *khelisupali* was a term of a particular group of officials. A *khelisupali* was an official entrusted with high authority, the responsible head of his *kheli* or department of state affairs; the *khelisupalni* thus were the principal departmental officials while the *sakmis mokmedni* (literally the "business doers") constituted the junior executive officials.

Khelisupalni holding great offices were called *didebulni khelisupalni*. *Didebulni khelisupalni* were also called *ganmgebelni, zedamkhedvelni sakmeta*, that is directors, controllers of state affairs. They were therefore also entitled *tanaziarni mepobisa*, i.e. "sharers of kingship".

[1] Later, however, it was used to denote "The King".
[2] See *Sami Sigeli*, published by S. Kakabadze, p. 7.

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

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645 647 *Sakmis mokmedni* were of two grades, namely *didni* and *mtsireni*, that is "great and small". *Mokheleni* were divided in accordance with the arena of their activity; thus the officials serving in the principal central institutions of the state, called *Darbazi* (Persian *Dar-bar*) constituted the group of *Darbazis kars Mdgomni mokheleni*, i.e. "the officials of the court", *Darbazi*, while those of the provincial institutions constituted the group of *sakueqnod gamrigeni*, that is the provincial officials.

THE APPROXIMATE LIST OF DARBAZI OFFICIALS AND THEIR SUBORDINATES.

1. *Mdsignobart-Ukhutsesi*[1] the Chief of the Secretaries, resembling in some ways the Pehlevi *Dabribed*, in others the Byzantine *Protoasecrit*.
   Mdsignobarni[2]—secretaries. This word literally means "bookers", i.e. book-learned men.
   Sadsolis Mdsignobari—Secretary of the Royal Bedchamber.
   Zardakhnis Mdsignobari—Secretary of the Royal Arsenal.
   Sadchurdchlis Mdsignobari—Secretary of the Royal Treasury.
   A document entitled the "Court Regulations" reveals that there were in all 26 departmental *mdsignobarni*, their titles, however, excepting the three given above, are not mentioned.
   Mdsveralta Mtavari—the Chief of the Scribes.
   Mdsveralni—the Scribes.
2. *Amir-Spasalari*—War Minister and Commander-in-Chief corresponding to the West European Grand Constable.
   Amirakheri—Grand Equerry; assistant War Minister.
   Meabjret-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Armourers.
   Meabjre—Armourer.
   Abjris Mtvirtveli—Armour-Bearer.
   Mejinibet-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Grooms.
   Mejinibeni—the Grooms.
   Atchukji (a Turkish word, equivalent to the preceding).
   Amirtchkari—the Chief of the Messengers.
   Meremet-Ukhutsesi—Chief of the Stud-Grooms (*Meremé*—literally, *horse-herd*).
   Saremos-Ukhutsesi—Chief of the Stud (*Saremos*—literally, *place where the horse-herd is kept*).
   Saremos-Natsvali—Assistant Chief of the Stud.
   Meremeni—Stud-Grooms.
   Zardakhnis-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Arsenal.
   Zardakhnis-molare—the Treasurer of the Arsenal.
   Zardakhnis-mejinibe—the Equerry of the Arsenal.
   Zardakhnis-mdsignobari—the Secretary of the Arsenal.
   Misratult-Ukhutsesi—Chief Clerk of the Stables Department.
   Megodreni—Cofferers (? Treasurers, Accountants).
3. *Mandaturt-Ukhutsesi*—the Chief of the Mandators, resembling in some ways the High-Marshal of Ceremonies, in others the Byzantine *Proto-Mandator* or *Dromos-Logothets*, the Grand Domestic.

[1] *Ukhutsesi*, chief, means literally "eldest man", "elder".

[2] The term *Mdsignobari* gave place during the fourteenth century to the Persian form *mdivani*.

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Mandaturni—the Mandators.
Amir-Ejibi—the Grand Chamberlain.[1]
Gamgebt-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Stewards.
Gamgebni—the Stewards.
Ejibni—the Chamberlains.
Mestumrebt-Ukhutsesi—Chief Receiver of Guests.
Mestumari—Receiver of Guests.
Mojamebt-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Butlers.
Mojamebi—the Butlers.
Marigi—the Arranger.
Saganogos-Mukipi—Administrator of the Office of Gifts.
4. *Mandebardchlebt-Ukhutsesi*, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Natsvali Mandebardchlebt-Ukhutsesisa—the Vice-Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Kalakis-amirebi—the Amirs of the Towns.
Mustsribi—the Commissioner of the Exchequer.
Mandebardchleni-Kalakisani—the Treasurers of the Towns.
Darbazis Mandebardchleni—the Treasurers of Darbazi.
Sandebardchlis-Mukipi—Administrator ("Receiver") of the Treasury.
Mandebardchleni—the Treasurers.
Mokhsarebeni—the Tax Collectors.
5. *Atabagi* (a military-administrative title of Persian origin; literally, *ato-beg* = father-lord).
6. *Msakhurt-Ukhutsesi*—the Chief of the *Msakhurni* (Privy Purse).
Molaret-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Royal Treasury.
Molareni—the Treasurers.
Mesandoleb-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Royal Bedchamber.
Mesandoleni—Gentlemen of the Bedchamber.
Dsina Mdsolni—Gentlemen of the Bedchamler (literally, *in front sleepers*).
Sandolis Mokare—Officer of the Guard of the Bedchamber.
Parsbt-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Valets or Lackeys of the Court.
Parsbni—the Valets or Lackeys.
Mkervalt-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of Tailors.
Mkervalni—the Tailors.
Mokhilet-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Fruit Servers.
Tsitskhot-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Ladle Bearers.
7. *Meghvinet-Ukhutsesi*—the Chief of the Wine Servers.
Saghvinis-Mukipi—Receiver or Administrator of Gifts in the Wines Department.
Saghvinis Molare—the Treasurer of the Wine Cellar.
Meghvineni—Those who serve or look after the wine.
Piris Meghvine—Personal Wine Server of the King.
Melspeni—Wine Tax-collectors.
Mdsdeni—the Cup-bearers.
8. *Monadirebt-Ukhutsesi*—the Chief of the Hunters.
Monadireni—the Hunters.
9. *Tqismtsvelt-Ukhutsesi*—the Chief of the Foresters.

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[1] According to Wakhushti, the *Amir-Ejibi* had a general authority over all the Palace. At banquets he replied in the name of the King; the King's relations with courtesans were arranged through him, and no one might approach the King except through his mediation.

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645 THE APPROXIMATE LIST OF *Saqmoqbod Gamrigni* AND THEIR SUBORDINATES

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1. *Eristavt-Eristavni*, the Eristavis of Eristavis.
2. *Eristavni*—the Eristavis.
   Temis-Eristavni—the Eristavis of Temi (districts).
   Mdsignobarni—the Secretaries.
   Molarat-Ukhutsesi—the Chief of the Treasury.
   Molareni—the Treasurers.
   Tsikhis-tavni—the Captains of Fortresses.
   Khevisupalni-Mamasakhlisni; *gzirni*.
3. *Amirt-amirani*—the Amirs of Amirs.
4. *Tamsterni*—the Mamasakhlisni.
5. *Otkhmisdarni*—[1]
6. *Marzpanni*—the Frontier Officials. (A word of Persian origin.)
7. *Monapirani*—the Frontier Officials.

645 The first place among the *khelisupalni* was held by the *vazirni*—the viziers. The term *vaziri* (singular) is an Arabic-Persian word. In Arabic *Vaz-irum* meant assistant, collaborator and minister. The vazirate among the Arabs was first introduced by the Ummayyad Caliphs; in course of time and especially since the time of the Abbasid Caliphate the *vazirs* acquired great power and influence. Usually there was only one *vazir* under the Caliphate and he was the principal and the most powerful of all the ministers of the state. In the early Muslim despotats in Persia the title of *vazir* was given to only one of the ministers.

In Georgia, however, the term *vaziri* had been adopted as a general term for the ministers of the state. It seems to have been first introduced into Georgia during the reign of King Giorgi III (1156–84). At first, in Georgia, as in the Arab states, the term *vaziri* denoted assistant. For instance, in the *Court Regulations* it is stated that "Amirakhori is *vaziri* to the *Amir-Spasalari*".[2] As early as the reign of Queen Tamara, however, the term *vaziri*, as already stated, had become a general title denoting a minister.

At first there were only four *vazirni* at the Georgian Court, namely:

Mdsignobart-Ukhutsesi
Amir-Spasalari
Mandaturt-Ukhutsesi
Medchurdchlet-Ukhutsesi.

This number was increased to five by Queen Tamara who in 1212 created the office of *Atabagi* (*atabagoba*).

[1] This title is only mentioned in two *sigelni*, dated 1027 and 1189. Georgian historians, some of whom think it to have been a title in use only in Imereti, do not seem to have been able to interpret its meaning.

[2] *Khelmdsipis Karis Garigeba* (*Court Regulations*), published by Prof. E. Taqaishvili, p. 9, par. 18.

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THE PEOPLE AND THE POWER

It was the practice of the Georgian Kings and of the earlier Iberian rulers to maintain a force of regular paid troops in garrison at Tiflis and in the provincial fortresses. David Aghmashenebeli in the twelfth century is reputed to have kept 60,000 paid troops always under arms.[1] A proportion of these regular troops appear generally to have been foreign mercenaries. David Aghmashenebeli certainly had large numbers of Kipchaks and Ossetians in his pay; his grandfather Bagrat IV in the eleventh century had three thousand Warangs—Russians or possibly Saxon and Norse freebooters like those who served the Byzantine Emperors—fighting for him in his difficult wars against the feudality[2]: Giorgi Lasha according to the Annals, lost an eye in a brawl with his mercenary horsemen in the streets of Tiflis, when he visited their barracks drunk and they did not recognize him[3]: and it was the Persian mercenaries of Rusudani who betrayed the gates of Tiflis to Jalal-ul-din, and who together with the Persians living in the city attacked the Georgian defenders from inside.[4]

The regular troops were apparently responsible for providing their own arms, but they received a fixed pay. The *Amir-Spasalari* exercised the functions of command under the King, and the *Msakhurt-Ukhutsesi* was responsible for the practical and technical organization of the army. During the great days of the mediæval Kingdom, the *Mdsignobart-Ukhutsesi*, Chief of the Secretaries of the King, who was by custom the occupant of the important Imerian see of Dchqondidi, occupied a special relation to the army. He was responsible for the issue of writs of mobilization, he bore the Holy Cross before the army on the march and, during action, he carried out the duties of *Chakhtauli* or commander of the rearguard. In time of war, the body of the army was, of course, composed of feudal levies, who were summoned by writ and messenger on the approach of hostilities.

The feudal army of the Georgian Kings was organized in four banners: the advance guard was made up of the Meskhians; on the right wing were the men of Imereti and Mingrelia, with the Abkhazian and Circassian contingents; on the left were the men of Kakheti and Hereti. The King's bodyguard with the royal standard was composed of Kartlian troops.

It was not always the case that a general mobilization was made, and on the occasions of outbreak of a frontier conflict

[1] Wakhushti, *Dct. Géo.*, pp. 55 *et seq.* [3] *Annals*, Brosset, *H. de la G.*, I, 321.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 321. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 503.

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establishment of Soviet rule. The Mensheviks, on the other hand, had 60,000 members on the very eve of the collapse of Georgian national independence. After Georgia's annexation by Soviet Russia the Mensheviks and other opposition forces continued to exercise considerable influence on the Georgian peasantry, whose material conditions remained unsatisfactory, and on Georgian intellectuals, who temporarily were replaced in the administration of the country by Russian communists. By 1924 half the civil servants in Georgia were of non-Georgian origin and in Tiflis, the capital, as many as 63 per cent.[23]

In view of the comparatively liberal rule of the local communists, underground activities on a mass scale were then still possible in Georgia. All non-Bolshevik groups of Georgia formed a secret coalition under Menshevik leadership and also established contact with resistance forces in the Northern Caucasus and in Azerbaidzhan. On August 27th, 1924, the long prepared rising broke out. It was probably the biggest anti-Soviet insurrection initiated by any non-Russian nationality after the end of the Civil War. The centres of the rising were the rural areas in Western Georgia and the Chiaturi manganese mines, the most vital economic asset of the country. The rising was liquidated by the Red Army within a few days. A British trade union delegation which toured the Caucasus soon afterwards and which otherwise almost entirely endorsed the official Soviet attitude remarked: 'The insurrection probably had the sympathy of a majority of Georgians and would have had their support had it succeeded. But it never had any chance of success.'[24]

About 3,000 people perished in the rising. The régime showed a comparatively mild attitude towards the organizers of the insurrection; none of them was executed after a trial which took place in the summer of 1925. Later on Soviet courts were less indulgent and passed death sentences not only on genuine rebels but also on participants in imaginary plots against the régime. The rising was nevertheless a turning point. It led to the speedy liquidation of all opposition groups and the complete consolidation of the communist one-party system in Georgia. Inside the Communist Party itself conditions remained unsatisfactory. Official Soviet sources pointed out later that members of a gang of 'enemies of the people' had penetrated into high party and state posts, particularly during 1929 to 1931.[25]

Stalin's principal antagonists in Georgia were, however, not the new converts to Bolshevism, but the old Bolsheviks around Makharadze, the President of Georgia, and Mdivani, the Vice-Premier. For a long time mutual dislike and hostility were covered up by hypocritical statements which reached a culminating point in the celebrations held in Tiflis in February 1936 on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Georgian Soviet Republic. The Georgian leaders to whom Stalin extended his congratulations were then already marked as purge victims.